

Economic Development Advisory Council

4.14.10 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Present:

Tracy Bardsley, Do-it
Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co
George Infanti, Milford Paint
Heather Leach, Centrix Bank
Tom Sapienza, Hampshire Hills Sports Club
Penny Seaver, Smith, Seaver & Bean
Sean Trombly, Trombly Farms
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc

Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission
Bill Parker, Director Community Development
Mike Putnam, BOS & Water/Sewer Commission
Janet Langdell, Planning Board representative
Shirley Wilson, Community Development Admin. Assistant

Invited guests:

Dan Barufaldi, Economic Director for the City of Dover, NH

Also present:

Michelle Sampson, Wadleigh Memorial Library
Hannah Trombly, Milford School System (1ST grade)

T. Sapienza called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

Minutes:

G. Infanti made a motion to approve the 10/14/09 minutes as written. S. Trombly seconded, J. Langdell abstained, and all in favor. M. Sampson made a clarification for the 3/10/10 minutes; on page 3 *the library* not the Fire department has Constant Comment. The fire department uses .pdf documents. G. Infanti made a motion to approve the 3/10/10 minutes with the changes as noted. S. Trombly seconded and all in favor.

Presentation and discussion:

Highlights from Dan Barufaldi the Economic Director for the City of Dover, NH

Economic development is very personal and very emotional
Economic development should be done with balance to preserve the character and quality of place
Economic development has three options; expansion, stagnation, and contraction

His focus is in the areas of business retention, business expansion, business attraction, tourism and special projects. Last year the Children's Museum came to Dover and with that, 130,000 visitors as well as instant parking problems so he is looking into a parking garage with regards to public/private, mixed use, and other development options based on Dover's demographics of an "urban village".

You are the visionaries for Milford. The economic development process is to move from a vision to strategic plans and then to action or work plans with specific objectives that are measurable in four areas; the tax base, job growth, retention/expansion, and quality of life. A set time frame and specific review cycles keep everyone involved and keeps the focus on track.

Guidelines for economic development:

- A diverse representation on the committee
- Create an economic philosophy using;
 - Consensus
 - Commitment from the community
 - Two way communication with an emphasis on listening
- Build on assets
- Identify obstacles

Pick the low hanging fruit that is relatively short term to go after because you want to demonstrate progress early on to the community. Success breeds success and it breeds more support and commitment in town.

Development tools:

- Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZ's) are an excellent development tool for downtown infill areas. Dover is filling old rehabbed buildings quickly. The businesses who hire people are judged by the number of jobs created and compensation tier levels of those jobs to earn points towards tax exemptions from the business profits tax and if there is enough to spill over, into the business enterprise tax. For a small business \$200,000 over five years is a significant amount of money. This is a two step process through DRED that can be used for business retention/expansion as well as business attraction.
- Establish an annual calendar;

Get various groups/participants together in one room to coordinate all the arts, events, festivals, celebrations, activities, and athletic tournaments/meets. Dover uses "peek at the week" on their website which is updated on Thursdays.
- Put together a developer's manual

Dover takes a very proactive approach for one stop shopping; to make it easy for potential developers and businesses. The manual outlines the process to do everything and is available online.
- Create a technical review committee

Dover's group, with representatives from every department, meets once a week with clients to review conceptual plans and initial proposals to discuss all the issues up front. The group then meets between the first and second meetings and has a chance to comment and discuss the plans and provides written comments with everything the applicant needs to do or change. The client comes back for a second meeting and in two meetings they are ready to go to the Planning Board; there are no surprises. Communication is the key and he has a good relationship with the planning director. The whole town government is business proactive.
- Print brochures to market the town

Immediately get brochures made up for potential clients that can be left behind. Dover's booklet covers business statistics and the quality of life, trying to balance content with aesthetics. You have to sell the lifestyle of the town to the decision makers that this is a good place to move the business and to move the families. It also is online at DBIDA page.
- Publicity

Dover uses Channel 22 extensively sometimes featuring local companies and new businesses.
- Ambassador program

Dover has a group of volunteer business travelers, who do business regularly outside of Dover, to call on or identify potential companies. They go through an orientation program and are given brochures and an ambassador pin, which has kind of become a badge of honor. This is a way to get Dover on the radar in the relocation business. A retired city councilor runs the program which meets quarterly. Retired business people are a great resource.

Open discussion:

M. Putnam inquired about the parking situation in the center of town. D. Barufaldi replied that the key to parking is arranging the timing and type. We have just installed solar powered, computerized parking meters that enhanced the parking because there is no time overlap, so the parking revenue has increased by 27% over the last three months. We are looking into adding forty more meters in addition to the future parking garage which will

be paid parking. We are trying to engineer our parking capabilities in such a way that employees and business owners will have long term fixed parking off street leaving the on-street parking for walk-in customers. D. Barufaldi then discussed the future mixed use waterfront project that will be connected to the city core by the Washington Street Bridge. Dover is using the museums as tourist anchors and we want to really establish Dover as a cultural and tourist destination.

B. Parker inquired if Dover had any business parks. D. Barufaldi said we have four; one business/enterprise park with the roads in place and infrastructure already stubbed in to each property and three industrial parks for manufacturing which are mostly filled out and owned by the businesses. The business park has a little different type zoning and the land was flexible in design to accommodate any size business. For the enterprise/business park we used a BFA lease back mechanism from the finance authority. DBIDA built the buildings with a long term lease agreement where the lease payments became equity if the business purchased the site within five years. It's a great way for a small company to get into their own building without a lot of up front cash outlay. This was done through BFA bonding.

D. Barufaldi suggested getting on the radar with DRED because communication with the State is important. They were very helpful in getting the electronics recycling company URT to relocate Dover.

George Ball – Commissioner

Michael Bergeron – Business Development Manager

Steve Boucher – Communications Director

C. Costantino asked about the industrial park's infrastructure. D. Barufaldi explained that DBIDA actually bonded the construction for the roads and infrastructure and described the layout.

G. Infanti said we've heard some great ideas. We are on a much smaller scale, but we have the same problems with parking and undeveloped land. We have the land, but it's not marketable and we need to go from barren land to shovel ready. That's where we need to see what other town and cities have done so Milford doesn't have to write the check. D. Barufaldi said that relocating companies want to come in now, not two or three years from now.

D. White asked how the project was bonded and how to get the town to support that. D. Barufaldi said he works at each of the relationships with the council members; he keeps them informed and everything we do is totally transparent. We put out the word online and we try to give people the opportunity to comment. The people in Dover understand that they have input. We are facing a deficit and possible upcoming budget cuts so we put boxes out in the lobby with every department function. Taxpayers/residents can come into the city manager's office to get 100 Dover dollars to allocate that money into the boxes/functions they feel are most important to be serviced. This survey gives people input as to how their money will be used and while it may or may not influence the council, it is taken into consideration. Physical presence is powerful because not all taxpayers are online.

T. Sapienza inquired about the overall calendar and how to coordinate the activities. Hampshire Hills is scheduling more big events at the Hampshire Dome which brings in thousands of visitors. He and Tracy have had discussions as to how to bring those visitors to the downtown, but do you have any suggestions. D. Barufaldi said that Dover uses "Dover discount coupons." Local businesses and museums provide discounts or two for one deals and the coupons are very well utilized. The Amtrak Downeaster has allowed us to put coupons in the seatbacks on the trains and we've combined that with a deal from Amtrak to get off in Dover without incurring a fare penalty. We also average about fifty commuters on the train to Boston, so that's a big help. T. Bardsley noted that Milford formerly had downtown dollars but there were some administrative issues. G. Infanti said there would probably be many businesses that would be willing to give a discount to draw people into town and something as simple as that could make a big difference. The events at the Dome over the past few weeks have drawn a lot of people in and if we could fine tune this to tie all the events together, it would be huge. T. Sapienza said we could do a display of some type. P. Seaver said we could also funnel the visitors to Nashua and Elm streets. D. White said these areas could be looked at by the Land use subcommittee and the entrances into town are so important. D. Barufaldi added that highway signage is important. They just made a deal for signs in both directions for the museums on Rte 16 and at the city limits. A brief discussion on signage ensued.

T. Bardsley inquired if Dover has a marketing budget. D. Barufaldi said they have a frugal budget of \$130,000 annually for DBIDA. Out of that comes the publicity and 9.5 hours for the administrative assistant's time and basic operations like phones and salary. T. Bardsley asked how he could leverage that and do all the various activities. D. Barufaldi gave the example of DoverTech. In terms of an economic multiplier there is nothing close to manufacturing. Service businesses have to have something to service and companies that provide products to the Health care industry and Department of Defense suppliers. We're looking to cluster high tech, high accuracy, high quality, high precision, knowledge based manufacturing businesses. We want to identify Dover as the crossroads for technology businesses in the seacoast area. For that reason Dover will be hosting a one day "intellectual property exchange" in October to bring together investors, individuals selling their products and ideas and businesses with investors. \$5,000 from my budget will be used for the publicity and we are using an event planning company on commission basis to plan the event. The website and urls have already been created for dovertch-nh.com which didn't cost us anything. This will create branding and in any case it will put Dover on the map as far as technology and that's invaluable. T. Bardsley said it seemed that Dover was very deliberate in the types of businesses that were recruited rather than waiting for them to come to you. D. Barufaldi said that was part of the initial community assessment to see what was needed. For example, we have three hotels in the area but our downtown hotel is full all the time, so we need another hotel downtown. We also actively work with marketing people for the hotel industry and the banking community for business financing. Small business is where it's at.

J. Langdell said that Dover is in a great location. Beyond the fantastic relationship with the railroad, what is your relationship with Portsmouth, Durham and other area towns? D. Barufaldi said that Dover's population is 29,000 and about 12,000 commute to Portsmouth everyday. We have a huge highly trained workforce in Dover, so anytime we bring a company in with good jobs, we can cherry-pick to our advantage. Portsmouth is about 90% developed and experiencing the associated problems. Pease is about 90% complete as far as land development. I see development moving north and the bridge capacity is about to be doubled. Dover is on the cusp; the next place to be when the economy turns around. We have available land and buildings, so the key is to get on the radar. When the city council authorized the RFP for the parking garage/possible hotel, we had people coming out of the woodwork from all over the country. We also have Wentworth Douglas Hospital and over one hundred private practices around it. The brand new medical building in North Dover has been completely filled already.

M. Ciardelli asked if they encountered any zoning problems or opportunities. D. Barufaldi said that they just moved to form-based code particularly for the downtown infill areas. Using form based code the Planning Board or City Council has discretion from the rigid requirements of the past, within reason if no safety or security issues exist. T. Bardsley asked if they offered tax incentives for infill properties. D. Barufaldi said no, but on rare occasions, the City Council will agree to advocate that. You really have to show benefit. J. Langdell added that the Nashua and Elm Street Corridor overlay district was taken from a form based code perspective and we are starting to make things fit. B. Parker said we just haven't really had any new construction to apply it to.

B. Parker said we just have to find our assets and pull it all together. J. Langdell asked if our assets were only in Milford or were they in the area. T. Bardsley noted that there is a railroad station in Fitchburg, only twenty minutes away and a brief discussion on Milford's assets followed. S. Trombly said we need a destination. D. Barufaldi said to think regionally and gave an example of a company who relocated to the neighboring town because of the available water supply instead of Dover and got a percentage of the available jobs. M. Sampson said we do have a lot right here, that balance between rural and the big city. D. Barufaldi said Dover sells three lifestyles; urban, rural and suburban. J. Langdell said our challenge is that we need to put the package together and have something a more concrete to start discussion with the public. We need the content and the message which hasn't been developed yet; potentially, the greater Souhegan Valley.

T. Sapienza thanked Dan for his impressive presentation. D. Barufaldi said he has learned as well, Milford is doing some things that we can improve on. It is always valuable to have a dialog. D. White said it would have been good to have Guy here today. B. Parker said that Guy knew about this, but was out of town.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The next meeting will be Wednesday 4/21/10.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05AM.